DESERT TRACKS

VOL. 5 NO. 3 | SOUTHWEST CHAPTER OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ORGANIZATION | JUNE 1992

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FROM THE PRESIDENT --- DOYLE REED

For those of you who could not attend the outing on April 25-26, you missed a top ranking event. We visited early day trails in areas that are accessible only by a lot of hard work on the part of the organizing committee. Our thanks to Etters and Roots for an excellent job.

The details of the business meeting are in the minutes but I want to call attention to one action taken.

Don Buck, who has been documenting the California Trail for the national Park Service in anticipation of it being designated a Historic Trail, reported that the NPS had recommended that the southwest trails not be classified as Historical because no traces remain of their existence. We are inclined to think differently based on our outings.

As a result, the chapter took action to record on Topo Maps, the trails we follow on each outing so that we will have a body of information to present when the time becomes appropriate to open the question of Historical designation for the trails in the southwest area.

The leaders of each outing will be responsible for determining which maps are needed for their outing and obtaining at chapter expense, copies of these maps for the information to be recorded on. These leaders will also be responsible for marking the maps, with the help of the rest of us, and getting the marked copies to Jim Byrkit who graciously agreed to be the Map Chairman and to store the maps for the chapter. He also has information on the OCTA standards for marking maps so our library will be ready to use when the time comes for adding the term "Historical Trails" to our trails.

The leaders of the trip will also indicate in the outings notices, what maps cover the outing so those map nuts in the group who want their own copies can obtain them prior to the outing.

All members are asked to contribute what they can to making this operation a success.

See you all at the planning session at the Jim and Marian Carter home in Alto NM on July 18 and 19. Come with all your ideas for productive outings and other activities.

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

JULY 18 - 19:
Annual Planning Meeting
Alto, NM

August 12 - 15:
National OCTA Convention
Rock Springs, WY

ANNUAL PLANNING MEETING
ALTO, NEW MEXICO
JULY 18-19, 1992
HOSTED BY
JIM AND MARION CARTER

The Carters have invited us to their summer home in the New Mexico high country at Alto for our annual planning meeting. All chapter members were sent the details of the meeting in May, this is merely a reminder.

The plans call for the group to rendezvous at the Carters at noon on Saturday with your brown bag lunch. The afternoon will be spent hammering out the plans for the next year. After that hefty job, we will have our time of "attitude adjustment" and then dinner provided by the Carters (cost shared by attendees). The day will end with an evening program.

Sunday we will meet for a brunch and that will end the "official" part of the weekend. Jim says there is much to do in the vicinity for those that can stick around, and he will have some helpful information for you to look at.

IMPORTANT!!

➤ Bring your ideas for programs this next year and bring your personal calendars along with your "busy" times so we can plan for the weekends when the most members can be available to attend.

➤ If you cannot attend, but have an idea you would like to propose, send all the details to the Carters so it can be included in the planning.

➤ Please let the Carters know if you are coming by July 6 so they can plan accordingly. They included a nice list of area motels and campgrounds in their mailing.

If you have questions, give Carters
a call at (505) 336-8378.

MINUTES OF SWOCTA
BUSINESS MEETING - APRIL 25, 1992

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM in the Western Skies Motel of Lordsburg, NM by President Doyle Reed. Members present included Don and Velma Buck, Jim Byrkit, Dr. Susan Badger Doyle, Pat and Paul Etter, Sheri and Bob Lee, Fiona and Doyle Reed, Ruth and Jack Root, Rose Ann and Harland Tompkins, and Reba Wells. There were two guests present.

Etters and Roots were given a well deserved round of applause for their excellent work planning the field trip.

The minutes were approved as printed in the last newsletter. The treasurer reported a balance of $432.43.

Pat told us ranchers are worried/concerned about what we are doing in their area. We must explain to them we are historians.

A discussion was held with respect to liability insurance. This discussion will be continued at the annual planning meeting.

Concern was expressed that hikes need to be classified as to their difficulty. After discussion it was agreed hikes will be described in the agenda prepared for each field trip, but will not be formally classified.

Our past map chairman did not renew his membership with OCTA or SWOCTA, hence, Harlie and Rose Ann will meet with him and acquire our map collection before the next meeting.

Someone has suggested the field trip leaders let us know in advance which topo maps pertain to the next adventure so that we may purchase them in advance if we so choose. Suggestion enthusiastically accepted.

It was suggested we create a map archives and mark a topo map of each field trip with the researched route we have taken, then include it in our Archives. Harlie turned this suggestion into a motion. Susan seconded. Motion carried. Jim Byrkit agreed to be our new "Keeper of the Maps", perhaps adding some duplicates from his private collection to our archives.

Don advised us the NPS did a survey of southern trails with respect to including them in the National Historic Trails. NPS concluded not enough evidence existed to deem them worthy of inclusion; i.e. there were not enough traces. The thought was perhaps we can change their opinion with our research and collection of maps, journals and diaries.

The secretary/treasurer collected the trail fees and liability waivers.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Sheri Lee, Secretary

THE EDITOR'S TWO CENTS --- We had some outstanding activities this past year. The personal knowledge of the members who planned and executed those activities was evident. It is truly amazing how much research the members of this group are doing. The excitement generated each time we are together makes for fun, fellowship, and much learning. I would hope that there are others who will be willing to share their knowledge this coming year with the rest of us.

THE PERILS OF ATTENDING AN OCTA BOARD MEETING

I have done considerable traveling in my life but since retirement, travel has been largely confined to the family car, 1983 vintage. As president of the chapter, I got a notice of the OCTA Board meeting in Independence on March 28 with a place on the program for reports from chapters. I decided I should perform all my duties by going to the meeting. It would also give me an opportunity to see my mother who lives in Manhattan, Kansas.

I got my ticket to fly from Sacramento to Kansas City with a change of planes in Dallas. I would pick up an Avis car in Kansas City. On the flight from Dallas to Kansas City, I asked my seat mate if he was familiar with the airport in KC and specifically how to contact Avis. He was picking up an Avis car also so all I had to do was follow him.

We made it to the Avis office, I picked up my car, a new Pontiac compact, followed my seat mate out of the airport and onto the freeway that goes around the airport and eventually turned west on Hwy 24 headed for Manhattan.

The car ran fine and I was familiar enough with the road to have no problems. But as I approached Manhattan, the sun was getting lower and lower in the western sky. I decided I had better find out how to turn the lights on before it got too dark. If the car had a headlight switch, I was unable to find it. I decided I should stop at the next filling station or pull out and find a solution to this problem. But as my luck would have it, no pull out and no filling station.

As I pulled into the outskirts of Manhattan, the sun disappeared below the western skyline. Luckily, my sister lives on the east side of town and only a block from the highway. I was able to sneak down a back street and get to her place before it was completely dark.

Then my problems really began. I couldn't get out of the car. How was I to know that when you put the car in gear, it automatically locked all the doors and didn't unlock them when you took the car out of gear.

As I was fiddling around trying to find a way out of the car, the dome light came on. That helped because I could then see well enough to figure out how to open the door.

But then I couldn't get the dome light turned off. In my poking and turning of knobs, etc., I accidently turned the head lights on. I had played with that knob before but it didn't turn the lights on when I needed them. The dome light finally went out all on its own. What will the car manufacturers think of next?

When I got back to Dallas on the way home, my plane was running late and landed at one end of the concourse so I was running short of time to get to my flight to Sacramento. You guessed it, my flight was not on the score board. I inquired at the closest gate and they got their computer to tell us my flight to Sacramento was at the other end of the concourse. I was told to take the trolly to get there which I proceeded to do. What they didn't tell me was that the trolly went out through the suburbs of Dallas then down town before we eventually got to gate 27 where I was supposed to get off. By now, my time was about expired and I was still two blocks from my plane. I walked up to the gate, presented my ticket and was told to board immediately. It was easy because by now, all the other passengers were in their seats and I had the aisle to myself.

Then they announced over the speaker that they were oversold and needed one person to give up their seat in return for a free lunch, a first class seat on the 5:30 flight, and $200. I was tempted but figured that with my luck the 5:30 flight would be canceled so I came on home and didn't even have any problem finding my car but had to pay $18 to get out of the parking lot.

Oh yes, the board had so many "important" things to talk about, they didn't have time for chapter reports.

Doyle Reed

Right:
Map Reading 101 - Class is in session, except for a few who are doing their own thing.

SOUTHERN TRAIL OUTING

April 25 and 26, 1992 - by Patricia A. Etter

The unofficial start to the weekend was at La Fiesta Restaurant in Douglas, Arizona, on April 24 where we drank Margarita toasts to ourselves and the beginning of our Southern Trail adventure in southeast Arizona and southwest New Mexico.

Fifteen members and two guests joined in the weekend. President Doyle Reed, and wife Fiona, came all the way from California, as did Don and Velma Buck. Susan Doyle arrived from New Mexico with friend Richard. The rest of us came from Arizona: the Tompkins', Roots, Etters, Sheri and Bob Lee, Reba Wells and guest Linda Connel, and Jim Byrkit.

Jack Root gathered the wagon masters together bright and early Saturday morning and went over some "rules for the road," designed for the safety and enjoyment of the group. For the first time, we asked for a waiver from each participant. That done, we also strongly advised that each wagon carry a CB. No one was kicked out for lack of one, but we hope that by next trip every car will have one.

And away we went in a cloud of dust, east on the Geronimo Trail. We stopped for a few minutes outside Slaughter Ranch, while Reba Wells regaled us with some stories of tough John Slaughter, who legend credits with always getting his man, but who never brought him back alive! Also there was a monument raised in honor of the Mormon Battalion. The Battalion trekked some miles south of this point, passing San Bernardino Rancho, now in Sonora, Mexico.

Next stop was Guadalupe Canyon, which hugs the Mexican border and runs east into New Mexico. This canyon has eluded researchers for many years since it is on private land and the owners have discouraged the public wandering around. There is a very good reason for this. Since the area is isolated, the owners have not been too keen on rescuing pregnant women, cars that have run out of gas, or cars that plain run out, etc.

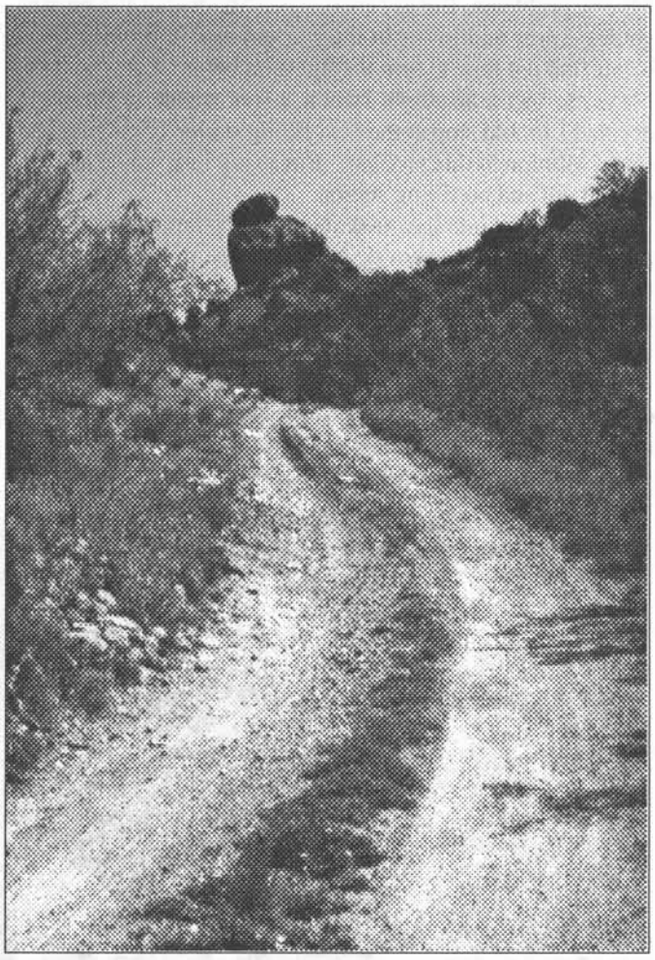
I was able to arrange entrance into the canyon as far as the famed "Balanced" or "Capped" rock that so many travelers talked about. Because of this, we can say for sure that we were following the emigrant trail. And what a day it was! The sky was crispy blue, the trees and shrubs were freshly painted green, and the birds were flitting about doing their spring thing. The trail crossed and recrossed the stream bed and was bordered with brilliant bouquets of bright orange globe mallow. The canyon probably had not changed much over the years except for the vagaries of Mother Nature: flooding and fire.

Some of our intrepid souls found a cave, some walked the road absorbing the beauty, many took photographs, and everyone of us thought that the owner of such a spot was a very lucky guy!

Before we took off up the canyon, we stopped at a little glen. I wanted the folks to see what the locals call the "white gate," which is a white obelisk that was put up to indicate the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico. The stream that flows down Guadalupe Canyon takes a southerly turn here, and I believe that this was the point at which emigrants left the canyon and turned into what is now Mexico.

We left reluctantly. But spirits picked up as we approached new beauties on our drive northeast into the Coronado National Forest and over the Cottonwood Trail into the Animas Valley. This was not part of the emigrant trail. We stopped near an almost dry stream for lunch and some wagon repair. (It happened just so we could know what the argonauts of '49 experienced. This time it was a broken belt, not a felly.) Participants produced at least a thousand tools, but only Bob Lee seemed to know what to do with them.

Over the mountain and into Animas Valley, we turned south toward Cloverdale Springs driving over rolling oak-covered hills. Here was an abandoned general store dating to



Above: Capped Rock or Balanced Rock - the famed Southern Trail landmark was liberally photographed from all angles during the trip into Guadalupe Canyon.

the Twenties, when Cloverdale sported a semblance of a village and its own post office. Got its name from clover in the area. Forty Niners also mention fields of clover in many of their diaries. So we knew that they had, indeed, come this way for the possibility of the continuation of the trail where it would join the Janos road. That is on private land, so we'll have to wait for another time to research the area.

Almost all the land in Animas Valley is privately owned by ranchers or the Nature Conservancy. As a result, future research will involve a good deal of PR with local people in order to obtain permission to search for the emigrant trail.

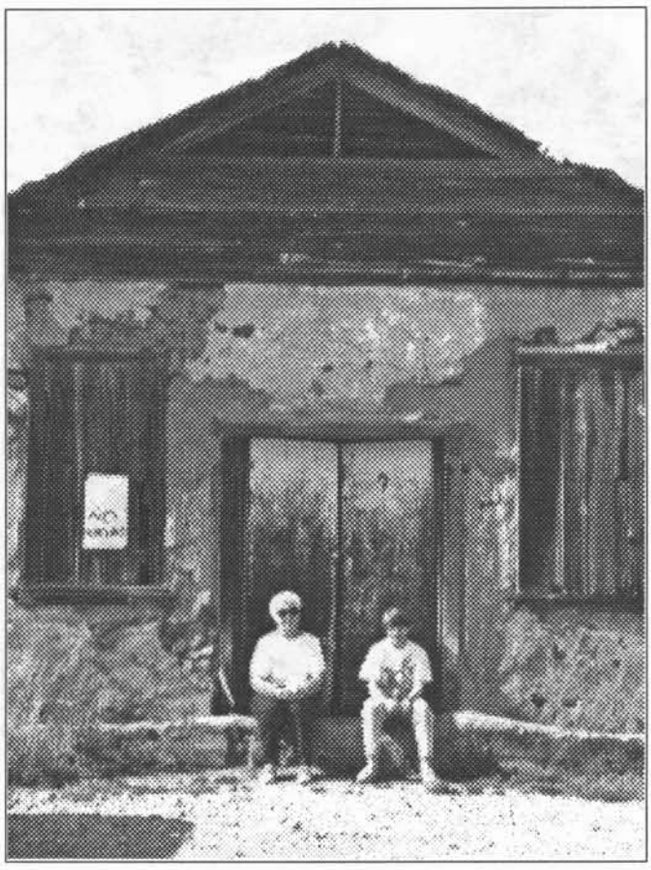
Since it was getting late, we headed for our encampment at a Lordsburg motel, looking forward to happy hour, dinner, and a chapter meeting.

Our first stop on Sunday Morning was the Nature Conservancy's new Gray Ranch. Geoff Babb, Manager, graciously allowed us to visit, though they are not yet open to the public. Their spread covers 500 square miles and protects some 100 endangered species in an ecosystem that is fairly unique, since it involves Mexican species of various plants and animals.

George Pendleton, rancher, aged 74, with a beatific smile, spun stories of days long gone by. We sat, transfixed, as he told us how his mom and dad went over Guadalupe Pass in a Model-T. Frankly, that must have been an adventure, since I thought the trip scary when I did it on horseback a number of years ago.

Leaving Gray Ranch, we drove north in Animas Valley to Don Shoup's Ranch, where we planned to drive to the summit of Whitmire Pass, following a road we supposed to have been used by overland emigrants. A sun-baked rancher, Danny Duggan, led the way uphill in his battered pick-up. Once at the summit, he regaled us with local lore. Considering the topography, this would have been the logical crossing point for overlanders. However, many emigrants describe a "cañon" and good sized oak trees (not seen on Whitmire). This may well have been in the Gillespie Pass area and, until we have researched that canyon and compared descriptions, I am unwilling to say for sure that the route went over Whitmire Pass. This is probably something we will want to do on one of our outings next season.

From the summit on Whitmire Pass, we had a fine view of Playas Valley to the east and the Animas Valley to the west. We ate lunches, agreed that we had another incredibly good day, then drove back to the ranch, where we reluctantly hugged everyone around before heading home.

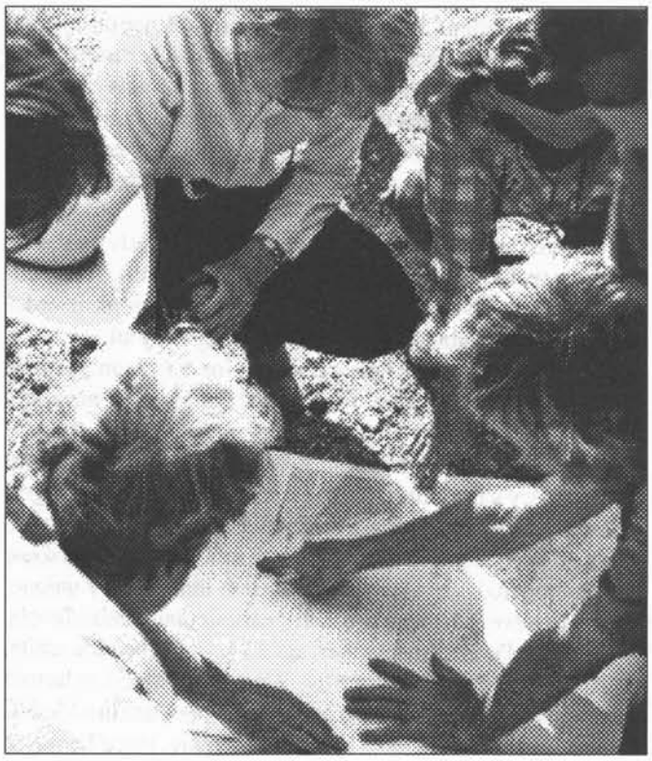


Above: Is this the Cloverdale Bus Stop? Ruth Root and Susan Doyle have a long wait ahead of them.

All photographs taken by the editor

Below: Trailside wagon repair - was it always like this - more kibitzers than repairers?

Map Reading 102



Map Reading 103

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